



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

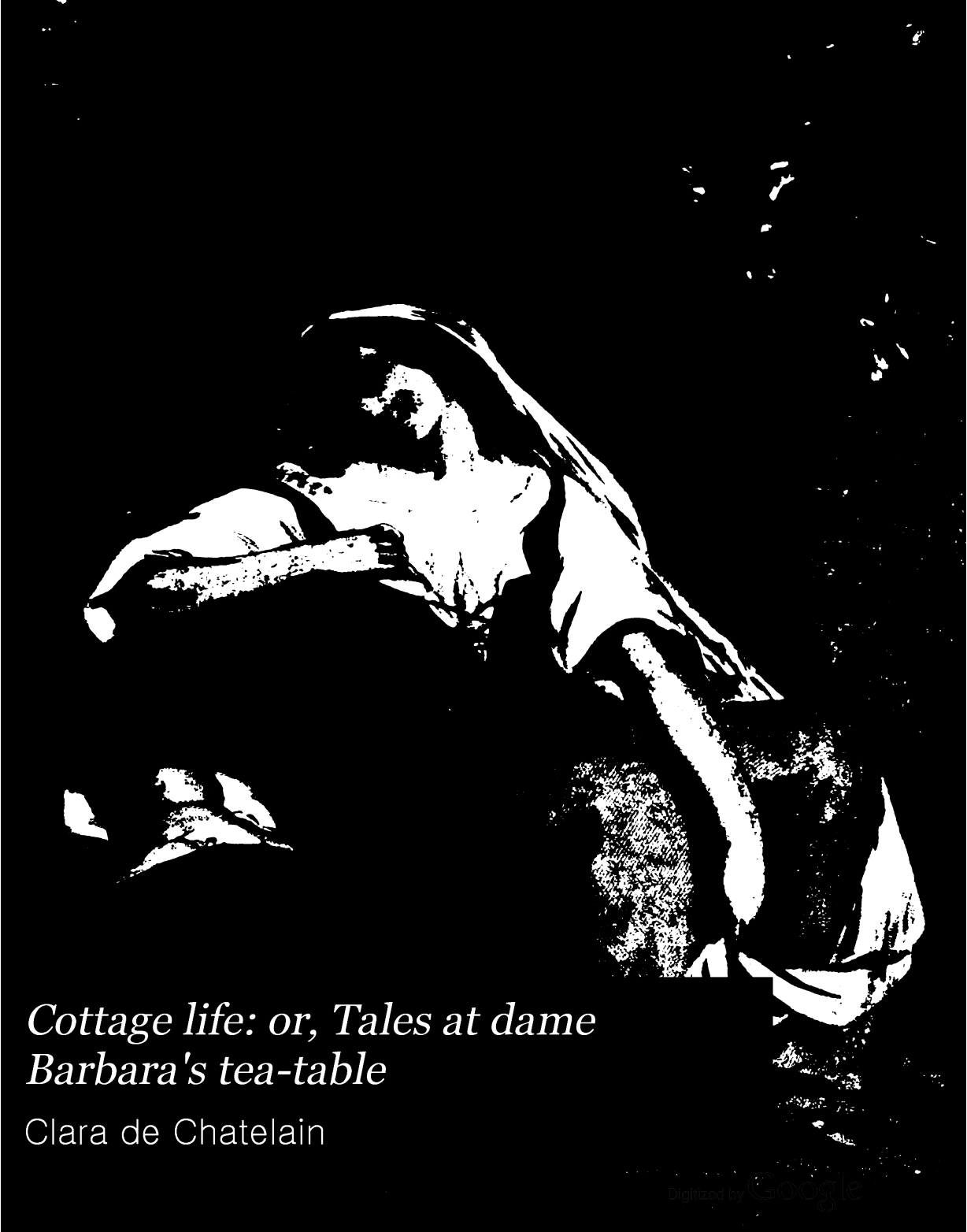
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



*Cottage life: or, Tales at dame  
Barbara's tea-table*

Clara de Chatelain

256 . e. 12107.



11









# COTTAGE LIFE,

OR

TALES AT DAME BARBARA'S TEA-TABLE.

BY

MADAME DE CHATELAIN.

---

ILLUSTRATED WITH SIX COLOURED PICTURES.

---

LONDON :

ADDEY & CO., 21, OLD BOND STREET.

MDCCLIII.

PRINTED BY C. WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.



## CONTENTS.

---

	PAGE.
DAME BARBARA'S TEA-TABLE . . . . .	1
PRETTY-EFFIE . . . . .	11
BROWN JANET ; OR, THE BEAN-STACK . . . . .	22
PUT IT OF TILL TO-MORROW ; OR, UNLUCKY DICK .	43
A ROMANCE IN AN ALMSHOUSE . . . . .	56

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

---

	PAGE.
JAMIE AND BARBARA . . . . .	8
PRETTY EFFIE . . . . .	12
PHILIP AND ALICE . . . . .	27
BROWN JANET. ( <i>Frontispiece</i> ) . . . . .	35
UNLUCKY DICK . . . . .	46
SNOW-DROP NELLY . . . . .	59

## DAME BARBARA'S TEA-TABLE.

I SHALL never forget the pleasant hours I spent at the tea-table of the venerable lady whose name is given as the title of this little book. Dame Barbara was the living chronicle of the place she inhabited, a small village on the northern frontier of England, where begin the almost insensible gradations from Scotch to English,—like as water assumes a brackish taste near the sea,—the inhabitants having mostly Scotch names, and speaking with an unmistakeable accent. The good dame knew the humble histories of all her neighbours, both of this and the two preceding generations, but not a word of scandal, I verily believe, ever passed her lips; and having an education far superior to those around her, there was all the charm of a living book in her conversation, and delighted was I to turn over its pages as often as opportunity permitted. I think I still see her in her slate-coloured gown and close cap, her mild, cheerful countenance beaming with goodness, as she answered my numerous questions, which I hoped would lead to some interesting narrative.

One afternoon when she was in a particularly talkative mood

B

(for at times she seemed not to like any reference to her own past life) I ventured to ask her how it happened that she had acquired a degree of instruction that placed her so much above her neighbours?

“I will tell you,” said she, shaking the crumbs from her apron, and taking up her knitting: “not because I am proud of my learning, but because my story may serve as a useful warning to those who put faith in silly prophecies.”

She then proceeded to unfold her simple tale; which, as well as all the following ones, I shall give as nearly in her own words as memory serves me.

“I was born in a village a good many miles from hence, and having had the misfortune to lose my mother at my birth, and my father dying soon after, I was left to the care of my maternal grandmother, who was a farmer’s widow, in easy circumstances. My grandmother doated upon me. I no sooner began to speak than she fancied I was the cleverest child that had ever lived, and she would repeat my prattle to all her friends, calling upon them to admire my precocious wit. Had her foolish weakness stopped at this, I should have only run the risk of growing up vainer and sillier than other girls of my age; but, unfortunately, she had so taken hold of the notion, that I was born to some grand destiny, that, during a journey to Edinburgh, whither she once in her life was obliged to go on business, nothing would serve

her but she must consult a fortune-teller, to ascertain her darling's future fate. I was then about six years old. My grandmother had already consulted sundry wandering sooth-sayers, some of whom had promised me a coach-and-six, and others a handsome husband, according to the fee they had received, but this was not enough for her ambition. So she went to a celebrated fortune-teller in Edinburgh, and having put a piece of silver into her hand, told her, with much simplicity, how little she had hitherto been satisfied with what had been predicted for her wonderful child, when the sybil looked wise, and said, if the little girl were brought to her, and her grandmother chose to have her hand crossed with a golden coin, she would tell her something worth hearing. "For," added the prophetess, emphatically, "the stars never deceive *me*."

My grandmother, accordingly, took me to this infallible fortune-teller, who lived, I remember, on a fifth story; and frightened was I, as I well recollect, when I entered the abode of the weird woman, who sat with disordered locks, and shabby garments, before a small table covered with dirty green baize, on which was placed a greasy pack of cards, a stuffed owl, and other emblems of her craft. She gazed at me a long while with her dark eyes, and then having examined my hand, and asked the exact hour of my birth, she said: "You were right, nobody has yet told you the truth about this child;" and she then whispered a few

words into my grandmother's ear, which made the good lady nearly shriek with joy, while she almost smothered me with kisses, and added another half-guinea to the guinea she had already given. I did not understand in the least what it all meant, nor why my poor grandmother kept looking at me with tears of joy in her eyes, but I felt vastly relieved as we came down stairs, for the weird woman's piercing eyes haunted me still.

Shortly after, we returned home. My grandmother said nothing more to me on the subject for the present, but I felt, somehow, that she treated me, not with more kindness, for that could hardly be, but with, I must call it, a sort of deference, not usually shown to a child. I had my own way in everything, and I have often since flattered myself with the conviction, that the seeds of goodness in my heart must have been of sturdy growth indeed, not to be choked and overgrown by the pernicious effects of such silly indulgence. At ten years old, however, I received the first check to my will, on my grandmother's telling me, that she meant to place me at a fashionable boarding-school; and, on finding that my resistance, and my repeated assurances that I would not go, failed in their usual effect.

"Indeed, my dear Bab, you must go," said my grandmother, mildly, "for how else will you learn all the fine things that young ladies are taught?"

"But I'm not a young lady," said I, crying, "and I won't go."

"Hush, hush," quoth my grandmother, "you don't know what is yet in store for you. But, if you're good, and try to learn to be an accomplished young lady, then my pretty Bab shall hear what the weird woman has promised her."

A vague curiosity to learn what this might be soon dried my tears, and I besought my grandmother to tell me at once what the fortune-teller had said. But the good soul had just sufficient cunning to keep my curiosity alive, by positively refusing to tell a word till next quarter. So to school I went, and here I began the usual routine of grammar, history, and geography; to which dancing and other accomplishments were to succeed, as soon as I should be tamed down from a wild country girl to a school miss. I waited impatiently for the holidays, less, I'm afraid, in the wish of seeing my kind, though weak relation, than to obtain possession of the secret I coveted; and, with the tenacity of childish curiosity, I had no sooner set my foot within my grandmother's dwelling, and scarcely given her time to expatiate on my growth and improved looks, when I claimed the performance of her promise.

"Child," said my grandmother, in a solemn tone, and laying her hand upon my head, "let it not make you proud

and overbearing, but the weird woman assured me that you are born to wear—”

“A silk gown, I dare say,” interrupted I.

“A crown!” cried my grandmother, in a tone I had never before heard her assume.

“What! shall I be a queen?” I exclaimed, capering for joy, “and have diamond necklaces and gowns for every day in the year!”

“But you won’t forget your old grandmother, will you, dear, even when you are a queen?” said the poor old body, with tears in her eyes.

My majesty kissed her heartily, assuring her I never should; and do you know, even at this distance of time, and though it was all nonsense, yet I’m glad I felt and spoke as I did on that occasion.

My grandmother warned me not to say anything of the sort in the neighbourhood; as, she observed, it would only make people jealous of my good luck. But not all her caution could prevent my telling the prophecy to every one of my schoolfellows the moment I returned to school. I was, of course, laughed at; and the name of the “little queen” was given to me ever after. But I did not care; I felt lifted so much above them, that their taunts could not affect me, and I made a show of generosity, by appointing one to be my lady in waiting, another to be mistress of the robes, and so

on, as soon as my imaginary court should be formed. I now perceived the wisdom of sending me to school to "learn to be accomplished," as my grandmother called it, for a queen who could neither dance nor curtsy would, I felt certain, look very foolish in the midst of her courtiers. On reading history, however, I began to anticipate some slight difficulties in the way of my future royalty, so when I returned for the next holidays, I enquired of my grandmother where my kingdom was to be, having now learnt that Scotland was not an independent state. My grandmother was struck by the sagacity of this remark; but she soon settled everything to her satisfaction, by assuring me that the young pretender, who was in foreign parts, was no doubt married, and had a son, who, in due time, would come back to Scotland to take possession of the throne, and place me by his side.

During my childish years I had formed an intimacy with a youth named Jamie, who was brought up at the house of a neighbouring farmer. We used to play together, and he used to call me his little wife; and now, when I returned for the holidays, we would walk through the fields, and gather fruit and flowers, seeking less for boisterous amusement than for the pleasure of each other's company. But somehow, ever since this portentous secret had been entrusted to me, I felt that our intimacy was no longer the same. I longed to tell Jamie what lay on my heart, yet could not resolve to

do so, from a vague feeling that it would give him pain. One day, however, as I was meditating deeply on my future grandeur, I answered him several times so foolishly, that he perceived I was not attending to him, and begged to know if anything was the matter with me? "Why, Jamie," I replied, "I'm thinking whether you shall be a lord or a duke, when I am queen." Jamie burst into a loud laugh; but when I came to explain my meaning, he hung his head and appeared grieved. "If that happens," said he, "I shall go to sea; "so Bab, don't trouble yourself to make a lord of me."

When I told my grandmother what had passed, and that I was sorry poor Jamie did not like my being made a queen, she observed I was now too old to be playing with boys; and then she secretly went over to the farmer's, and offered to pay down a certain sum to put Jamie out as an apprentice in some distant town. Here, however, she learned that Jamie was now an orphan, and that he had been confided, somewhat mysteriously, to the farmer's care; that his board was regularly paid for, and that they were, of course, bound to keep him as long as required. The farmer, indeed, was of opinion, he was some great man's child. No sooner had my grandmother heard this account, than she set it down he must be the pretender's offspring, secretly sent, under this humble disguise to Scotland; and henceforth,









instead of discouraging our familiarity, she treated Jamie with every possible kindness. Thus we went on seeing each other on intimate terms till I left school. But now came a great disappointment. Jamie turned out to be the natural son of a neighbouring squire, who set him up in business as a grocer, as soon as he became of age, and my grandmother would no longer hear of my looking upon him. I had now grown into a pretty girl of seventeen, was dressed out as a lady, and did nothing but elegant work, and thought a deal of myself, I promise you. I had many lovers beside Jamie ; but my grandmother said they were none of them the right one, and that I must wait till the prophecy came true. My own silly vanity and ambition, combined with implicit faith in the weird woman, prompted me to adopt my grandmother's notions so completely, that I waited and waited, fully expecting that I was still to be a queen. Seven years passed away, and I was now universally looked upon as a flirt and a jilt, whom nobody cared to ask in marriage. I had had the mortification to see Jamie provide himself with a partner, still no king's son came to the rescue to prove I had been right ; and I owned, in the bitterness of my heart, that I had foolishly sacrificed reality to a shadow. My infatuated grandmother persisted to the end, that I must still be a queen, and the last incoherent words she uttered on her

c

death-bed were, I believe, a prayer that I would not throw away my chance by any imprudent marriage.

I had now sunk into an old maid, but my royal pride was gone; and when, some years afterwards, Jamie's wife died, and he begged me to supply her place, I no longer thought myself above accepting him, but was glad to leave the scene of my former folly, and to join him here, whither he had retired from business on a small competency, and to think myself fortunate in becoming the queen—not, indeed, over the broad lands of Scotland, but over one true heart, and one humble household.

## PRETTY EFFIE.

My own experience, as Dame Barbara said, another day taught me a lesson of wisdom; and now, when I see girls longing for a station far above,—I don't say their birth, for that signifies neither here nor there—but their education, and early habits and associations, I always endeavour to persuade them that, except in those cases where genius lifts a ploughboy, or a milk-maid, up to the ranks of intellectual society, they would meet with more happiness by moving, and above all, by marrying amongst persons of their own class. And then it generally ends by my relating how it fared with a god-daughter of mine, "Pretty Effie," as she used to be called, whose fate, oddly enough, seems just calculated to point the moral of my own story.

One summer, when there was a deal of company at the hall, a young artist had been invited down to take sketches in the neighbourhood, and day after day he might be seen climbing over rocks and hills, gazing first on one beautiful landscape, and then on another, and then taking them down in his book with a pencil. Having rambled farther than usual, one lovely morning, chance led him right in front of

the cottage inhabited by Effie's parents, where sat my god-daughter watching over the cradle of her infant brother. There was something so graceful in her unstudied attitude, such a charm in the rounded outline of her sunny cheek, and so sweet and angelic an expression in her countenance, as her eyes were turned on the sleeping baby, that the young painter involuntarily uttered an exclamation of surprise and delight.

"A complete Madonna in the Murillo style!" cried he; "that need only be transferred to the canvas, to live, and and glow, and immortalize my name!"

Startled by the sound of his voice, Effie now raised her long eye-lashes, when, frightened at the sight of a stranger, she rose hastily, and ran into the cottage.

On beholding the beautiful picture, for as such he considered her, suddenly dashed to pieces by so abrupt a retreat, the disconcerted artist followed Effie's steps, but stopping on the threshold, for fear of alarming her, as a fowler cautiously approaches a timid bird, he enquired, in the most winning voice, whether she would oblige him with a little water for moistening his colours? Effie was too well bred to refuse so trifling a request, and presently came back with a glass in her hand, which she presented, with a deep blush, to the young artist, who had already opened his colour-box, taken out his brushes, and spread his portfolio.









“Is that infant yours, my pretty one?” enquired Algernon Hartley, by way of leading her into some talk, during which he hoped to be able to sketch her likeness.

“No, sir, it is my little brother;” said Effie, coldly, and again was about to retire, with an air of modest dignity, as if displeased at his familiarity, which the artist could not help admiring, as he quickly changed his tone, saying: “Do not, I pray, let me disturb you. I merely wanted to sketch this fine old tree that overhangs your cottage; but, if I am an intruder, I will leave directly.”

Effie was too shy, or too much confused, to say either “don’t go,” or “do go;” but she smiled, and resumed her seat, and began playing with the infant that had just woke. But the picture was not formed again as the artist had first admired it, though a series of other pictures, nearly equal in beauty, kept succeeding each other before his eyes. He longed to request her to resume her former attitude, but somehow he dared not. So he kept sketching away at the tree, and talking every now and then to Effie, to have an excuse to look at her, and hoping that the infant would presently go to sleep again. But the baby proved wakeful, and the painter was obliged to go away that day without accomplishing his wish, but telling Effie he would return another time and finish the tree.

And sure enough, no later than next morning, Algernon Hartley appeared again in front of the cottage; and this time, instead of running away in a fright, Effie first curtsied to him, and then went to fetch a glass of water, before he had even requested her to do so. Algernon watched her with admiring eyes, and longing to begin sketching her features, which he had vainly endeavoured to trace from memory the whole of the preceding day, he said: "How I should like to draw that pretty little infant asleep in his cradle! Will you kindly take care not to wake him till I have done?"

Effie was pleased at the idea of her infant brother's being put into a picture, so she took her seat beside the cradle, and as she bent over him to hush him up, she unconsciously again assumed the Madonna-like attitude that had so enraptured the young artist. "I must add you in to complete the picture," said Algernon, smiling, while Effie's shrinking modesty on finding herself the object of his gaze, added a fresh charm to her maidenly beauty.

By degrees, however, Effie grew less shy. Her parents came out by turns, and looked at the artist's sketch, and were so flattered at seeing their children's likenesses taken, that, by promising to give them the drawing he was busied upon to hang up in their cottage, he easily obtained permis-

sion to bring his oils and canvas, and set to in earnest to work at the Murillo-like picture he longed to paint from so lovely an original.

Algernon Hartley was an enthusiast in his art. Though clever in landscapes, it was the human face that he more especially delighted to delineate, and the exquisite painting he called into existence by merely copying the features of the simple country girl who sat for him, made him fancy himself violently in love with his fair model. Perhaps, had he searched very deeply into his heart, he would have found the impression she had made to be but a skin-deep one after all. Partly from the stillness necessarily observed by all sitters for their portrait, and partly from natural shyness, Effie spoke but little. Hartley had, therefore, nearly the whole conversation to himself, and when he descanted on art, and on various other topics, all a sealed book to her, he felt quite satisfied with a "yes," or a "no," by which she generally chimed in with every opinion he expressed. Even the most retiring are flattered by the admiration their beauty awakens, and Effie could not but be sensible how much she was admired. Algernon, though not strictly handsome, was intellectual-looking, and elegant in his person. Who can be surprised, therefore, if a mutual attachment sprang up between them, and if, long before the picture was finished, she had willingly agreed to bestow her hand and heart upon him?

The parents were no less surprised than delighted at the turn things had taken, and at so unhopèd-for a match for their daughter, whose beauty had always been the pride of their hearts,—for though the artist was poor, he was rich to them, and, moreover, was noticed at the hall. Now, indeed, thought they, will she be placed in her proper position, and made a lady of. Alas! poor souls, they forgot the old homely saying, that “Jack will never make a gentleman.”

It was agreed, when Hartley left the hall, at the end of the summer, that he would return after the next exhibition, and claim his bride. He now went back to London, where he spent the winter, and from whence he wrote several affectionate letters to Effie, who, it must be owned, was rather at a loss how to answer them properly, and often requested my advice on the subject. Probably these shortcomings may have given Hartley a hint, that he had perhaps made a hasty choice, but however that may be, when his picture of the Madonna and child (which was no other than that of Effie and her little brother) came to be exhibited, it was so much admired, that he felt a renewal of his flame, and came down and married her shortly afterwards.

Everybody thought that Effie was going to be very happy, but now came the reverse of the medal. The lovely painting had brought Algernon into notice, and suddenly lifted up the young artist to honour, affluence, and

fashionable society; but do you think his wife accompanied him to the fine houses that were now thrown open to receive him? Not a bit of it. A twelvemonth had scarcely past, when she wrote to me that they were now rich, that they had left their lodgings, and had a home of their own; but she did not say a word about being happy. In the postscript she asked me if I thought her penmanship improved, observing that Algernon had wished her to have a writing-master, and she hoped she did him credit. Poor Effie! this was only one of the many things which Hartley was ashamed of in his partner for life! Although at first he had shown her with pride to some of his friends, as the original of his Madonna, he had quickly discovered that she was wholly unqualified to shine even in his familiar circle. She had no conversation, and knew not what to say on the most trifling occasions, while the "yeses" and "noes" which had appeared so charmingly diffident while he was courting her, seemed now little short of downright stupidity between a husband and wife at their fireside. The more he rose in his profession, the worse matters became. Though Effie appeared graceful when quite at rest, motion vulgarized her. Not but she could skip or bound along a meadow with the ease of a young fawn; but she could not cross a room nor walk fashionably. Her hands, too, were far from white, while her arms, from long exposure to the sun, were so

irremediably tanned, that sundry receipts for softening the skin, that I sent at her request, failed to remove this stigma of her homely breeding, and at Algernon's urgent desire, she gave up ever wearing short sleeves. But even when the dancing-master and the grammar-master, had united their efforts to those of the dressmaker, Algernon felt painfully that his wife was but a puppet, not to be trusted to behave according to rule, and who, in spite of her beauty, would only prove a discredit to him. He, therefore, went out to parties alone, and as he chiefly visited persons far above himself in wealth and rank, whom he was not obliged to receive in turn, and to most of whom indeed he had concealed his marriage, poor Effie remained neglected and forlorn in their handsomely furnished house.

In the autumn of the second year of their marriage, the Hartleys came down to this neighbourhood, Algernon being engaged to paint the portrait of the Lord of the Manor's eldest daughter. They put up at an inn; and although the artist was as welcome a guest as ever at the Hall, Mrs. Hartley was never invited by its proud inmates, who could not think of associating with the peasant daughter of one of their tenants. On the other hand, all Effie's former associates were shy of her, and concluded, that being now a lady, she must be proud, although the poor thing was far too unhappy for that. As for myself, I was quite shocked at

the care-worn appearance of my once lively god-daughter. She seemed to be miserably ill at ease in her fine clothes, and was neither the pretty Effie of former times, nor yet the elegant Mrs. Hartley, as a fashionable painter's wife. She wore shoes that pinched her feet, to try and make them look small, and her once buoyant walk, had become an uneasy hobble in the vain attempt to assume a genteel gait. Her parents were vastly disappointed at the turn matters had taken, and almost reproached her because they had not got on in the world one jot the more for her being raised above them; and urged the necessity of doing something to help Johnny (that was her little brother) to be made a gentleman, since she was a lady.

Partly to comply with their unreasonable demands, and partly in hopes that former scenes might awaken kindlier feelings in Algernon's breast, Effie persuaded her husband, not without some difficulty, to walk over with her to her parents' cottage. But it was an unlucky move—for those very scenes so dear to poor Effie's heart, only awakened Hartley's irritability, and made him inwardly curse his own folly in having contracted a marriage that clogged his upward flight. "Had I not been led away by a pretty face," as Algernon gave her to understand in covert words, "I might now choose my partner from amongst the most gifted and refined in all the land."

There could, of course, be no cordial meeting between the disappointed parents and their discontented son-in-law. Algernon thought Johnny (whom two years before he had begged leave to paint as such a lovely infant) a very vulgar little urchin, and declared in no measured terms, that he would not be saddled with any more of the family. So what do you think was the end of poor Effie's fine marriage? Why, after returning to London for a brief season, her health grew so impaired by grief and the daily humiliations she endured, that her physician advised her removal to her native village for change of air. Here she took up her abode in a small ready-furnished house, where Algernon promised to join her later in the summer. However, he did not come, although I will say, he sent her all the money required for her comfort; but, under the pretence of anxiety for her health, he urged her to continue month after month, till they grew to years, in her northern dwelling. Poor Effie! she never left it, till she exchanged it for her last home! —Week by week she grew worse, and her spirit became fainter, and when at last I wrote, on my own responsibility, a peremptory letter to Hartley, telling him to come down if he wished to see his wife once more on this side of the grave, it was too late, for she died the night before his arrival.

I believe Algernon felt great remorse, and repented of his neglect, as well he might; but of what use was that to

Effie, when the daisies and cowslips were growing above her head? A little kindness in life would have been rather better than the fine marble monument to her memory, for which Algernon paid large sums; and have done more credit to the goodness of his heart.

## BROWN JANET; OR, THE BEAN-STACK.

As often as All-Hallow's Eve comes round again, said Dame Barbara one afternoon, I always think of Brown Janet. You know it is a custom amongst the people from the north country, to use certain spells on that particular night of the year, in order to catch a glimpse of their future husband or wife. While we are young, we are apt to believe in many things, as I once did, and then we may be excusable for so doing, but many a good laugh did the lads and lasses have against old farmer Gibbs, who must needs try his luck on All-Hallow's Eve. To return, however, to Brown Janet. They had got into a habit of calling her so in the village, not that she was browner than most country maidens who toil in the sun, but because her elder sister Alice, happened to be delicately fair; and as Janet's lively, active nature, made her prefer the out-door occupations, while Alice's health and disposition inclined her to the quieter offices of looking after the dairy, and doing all the needlework of the family, of course the difference of their complexions was still further increased by their habits. Alice was not only extremely

pretty, but her beauty was of that refined sort you hardly expect to meet with amongst those who have not been delicately nurtured. She could read and write too, which gave her a degree of superiority in a place where lasses of her station are seldom much educated. I am afraid Janet could do neither ; but she was a dear, good girl, for all that, as you will presently see, full of fun and spirits and good sense withal, and possessing one of the best of hearts that ever beat under a russet gown—and that is not saying a little. She looked up to her elder sister as to a being of superior order, and instead of laughing at her for a fine lady, as some would have done, she was only intent on smoothing her path through life, and taking all the rougher work upon herself. Janet knew she was not pretty, yet somehow few people thought so whenever she spoke or laughed—and if Alice was admired by all, certain am I that she was universally loved.

When I say loved, I do not mean in the way of sweet-hearts, for though perhaps several young men might have thought of her for a wife, still Janet had no declared lover. In fact her light was completely extinguished by her sister, and it seemed as if, for miles around, everybody was waiting to see who would carry off the beauty, before they cared to settle down into married men. So perhaps, these two girls might have remained single some years longer, one from

having too many suitors, and the other too few, had not a bad harvest suddenly altered the face of things, and nearly brought ruin into their father's household.

Farmer Davy, that was his name, though a good man in the main, had always been rather severe and peremptory with his daughters, dutiful as they were—and now that his recent losses had soured his temper, of course matters were not mended, and one afternoon that I met him, as I walked down to have a chat with the girls, he said, very abruptly, even for him: “Good day, Dame Barbara, I wish you would lecture my eldest girl, and tell her, a daughter ought to help her father, when she can do it by saying ‘Aye.’” And, without further explanation, he went his ways. After this I was not surprised to find Alice with red eyes, and even Janet out of spirits.

“Why, what is the matter, girls?” said I, with the privilege of an old friend, who had known and loved their late mother.

Instead of answering, Janet made me a sign to be quiet, while fresh tears came into Alice's eyes, and dropping her work, up she started, and ran out of the room.

“We have been going all wrong for some time, you must know,” said Janet, in reply to my enquiring look, “and father takes his losses very much to heart. Now, it seems, that old farmer Gibbs has all along been in love with Alice, only he

never dared tell her so, but since we've gone down in the world, he has actually taken advantage of it," added she, in a tone almost of indignation, "to ask my sister in marriage."

"How very wicked!" said I, unable to repress a smile. Then seeing her half-sorrowful half-pouting look, I checked myself, and merely observed: "well, my dear, this shows him at all events to be disinterested."

"Why, so it does," replied Janet; "but wasn't it wrong of him to apply for father's consent before he enquired whether Alice liked him or not?—for as to loving him," added she, with one of her old playful looks, "that, you know, is quite out of the question."

I was going to say: "To be sure, child!" when I recollected their father had requested me to lecture them, and though little disposed to do so, yet I thought I must not be throwing oil on the fire to make matters worse, and accordingly, instead of giving a direct answer, I asked, very demurely: "why she couldn't love him; whether he wasn't a very good sort of man, and a fine hale one, too, for his years?" All this Janet would grant me, but then could a beautiful girl like her sister "take up with the likes of him?" Rather than she should be thus sacrificed, Janet declared with a blush, that she would sooner marry him herself.

"And not a bad match either, my dear," said I, trying

to look wise. "But surely your father has not given his consent without consulting Alice?"

"Indeed he has," replied Janet, "and threatened to turn us both out of doors if we didn't receive old Gibbs properly when he came a-courting. For without him, he said, we shouldn't have bread to eat. And unless Alice was an undutiful child she would surely marry the man who offered to save her father."

"And what said Alice?" I inquired.

"She's a poor weak thing, you know," answered Janet, "so she only wept, which made father more angry still."

This all sounds like Auld Robin in the song, thought I, only I hope it will not end the same. Meantime Alice had returned to her seat; but before I could speak a word of comfort to her, in came the farmer, saying: "Well, Dame Barbara, have you convinced the girl she ought to do her duty?"

"Indeed, neighbour," said I, "you ought not to be so over hasty. Girls' hearts are not to be taken by storm."

Alice thanked me with a look.

"Now don't encourage her in her tantrums, Dame Bab," cried the bluff farmer; "I've given my word, and she must abide by it."

"But, father, I don't love him" murmured Alice, timidly, and never can, for I—"









"Don't talk nonsense," interrupted he, "you'll like better to sit in a snug house of your own than to go a-begging, or be on the parish, as needs you must, if you followed your own foolish whims. Poverty, girl, must not mate with poverty."

Alice turned pale. She had just half opened her lips to confess to her father that she had broken a coin with a young reaper she had met at a neighbour's harvest just a twelvemonth ago, but the words died in her throat when she found how contemptuously her father looked on her attachment.

"And suppose, father," cried bolder Janet, "she had promised Philip"—

"Tut! girl, don't tell me of any such promises!" exclaimed the farmer, petulantly, as he flung himself into a chair, and took up his pipe, either to smoke off his vexation, or to put a stop to all further conversation on the subject.

As I could do no good just then, and knew that he must work out his fit before anything could be urged upon him, with the slightest chance of success, I merely nodded to the girls, and stole out of the room as quietly as I could. But Janet followed me out to the gate.

"It almost breaks my heart," said the good girl, "to see Alice take on so. Farmer Gibbs has brought a deal of trouble into the house, and yet he's not a bad man either.

I can't blame him for loving my sister, though it is selfish of him to make conditions with father."

"More selfish still of father to accept them," thought I, though I didn't say so. But I volunteered to walk over to Farmer Gibbs's, and tell him plainly he ought to withdraw his suit since the young maiden's affections were engaged, unless indeed Alice had told him so already.

"She tell him, indeed!" said Janet, "she'd never dare. Besides, father has strictly forbidden us to mention Philip's name before Farmer Gibbs. And, moreover, like all the North Country folks, the good man is not easy to turn when once he's set upon anything."

And had the old gentleman actually come a-courting, and had Alice received him as a suitor, and made no resistance, I inquired? Yes, Farmer Gibbs had been there the night before, and had done his best to make himself agreeable to Alice. And Janet had been obliged to talk for her, and rattle on, sad as she really felt, lest their father should chide his eldest daughter's backwardness. For Alice's heart was too full to attempt to put on a cheerful countenance, and there she sat as pale as a lily, and sighing as if her heart would break; while Farmer Gibbs kept boasting of all the fine things he would buy for her; such silken gowns, such lace, and such ribbons! Then he ran on about his farm, and promised her absolute dominion

over the poultry-yard, the profits of which were to be her pin-money. Next, he descanted on the house which was to be re-furnished to her taste; and finished, by assuring her, that his plate, and fine home-spun house linen, would fill several large chests. Nor was sister Janet to be overlooked. She should live with them if she pleased, and take care of the dairy, or some such light office. What more could any wife require?

I pitied the poor man for being obliged to have recourse to an inventory of his chattels, as the only means of softening his mistress's heart, but I liked the close of his speech better than the beginning, as it showed a kindly feeling. And so I told Janet. "Yes," replied she, "I seem to be in the old man's good graces, for what do you think he said to me, as I lighted him to the door?" (and she imitated his broad Scotch accent) 'Hech, lassie, if your sister is bonniest, you are the blithest. And I wish you'd just say a gude word for me.' But not a word shall I say, I promise you," added Janet, firmly.

I then took my leave with rather a heavy heart, wondering how it would all end.

Farmer Davy puffed away at his pipe in dogged silence for a length of time after I was gone, and when he laid it aside, he said, in a tone of quiet determination: "Now, girls, we be going to-morrow afternoon to Farmer Gibbs's to

take a look at his farm, and have a cup of tea with Mrs. Deborah, his sister. I've promised to bring you, so let's have no more whimpering, but put on your holiday clothes, and your best looks, or you're no daughters of mine."

Alice bent her head in silence. She felt that to go and look at Master Gibbs's farm, and be presented to his relations, was very like acquiescing in the match that was being thrust upon her, yet she dared not oppose her father's wishes, in spite of Janet's hints, enforced by both elbow and toes; though she declared, on the following morning to her sister, who was helping her to dress, that she would as soon put on her grave-clothes, as be tricked out to be shown to Mrs. Deborah, as her brother's future bride.

To the farm however, they went, and you may be sure it was made to look very trim to receive the guests. Mistress Deborah showed Alice all over the house, and took great pride in displaying her brother's household treasures, such as old china and damask-linen, and kept assuring her with a very knowing look, that she would find everything in excellent order. Meantime, Farmer Gibbs had walked his neighbour across the yard, to treat him to a sight of his cattle, which was famous for miles around; while Janet, who had little patience with Mistress Deborah's promises, and still less with the sisterly airs she thought fit to assume, took herself off, first to the poultry-yard, and then to the

bee-hives in the garden. Here she was presently joined by Master Gibbs, who left his neighbour talking about rearing sheep with his shepherd, for having caught sight of Janet's red skirt, he concluded the rest of the women were near at hand. Finding her alone, however, he was not sorry to have an opportunity of questioning her.

"Do you think your sister will have me now, lassie?" inquired he, half-chuckling, as if scarcely doubting the answer.

"She must be hard-hearted, indeed," answered Janet, who recovered her spirits whenever she could banter any one, "if she resists the sight of your china."

"Nay, nay, now you're laughing at me, lassie, because I'm an old man, but what says the song?"—

"An old man's love the longest will last."

"Yes," quoth Janet, mischievously, "but the proverb says:—'Between the cup and the lip, there's many a slip.'"

"I wish I could know the lassie's mind," said the poor old suitor, piteously, "for sometimes I think she means yes, and at other times, no."

The spirit of waggersy having put to flight, for a few minutes at least, Janet's real concern for her sister, she could not resist making a fool of the old farmer, by saying: "If I were you, instead of asking here and there what

nobody could tell me, I'd try my luck on All Hallow's eve, and comb my hair before the glass, or walk round the bean-stack."

Not that Janet believed in such omens, which the increasing enlightenment of the age had taught her to laugh at, but she knew the farmer had preserved all the superstitious credulity belonging to his part of the country, and fancied this was the best way to stop all further questions.

"That's a good thought, girl," said he, with an air of perfect conviction, "since fate cannot choose but know its mind, though may be the lassie doesn't. But say nothing to the lassie about it, dear Janet," continued he, seeing a twinkle in her eye, that made him fear she was still laughing at him, "and I'll give you a new cloak at the next fair, and a kiss too, if you'll have it."

"I'll take the one, and leave the other," said Janet, archly. She had, somehow, a manner of saying pert things without being able to offend anybody.

They now joined the rest at the tea-table, and though they occasionally gave one another sly signals, as people often do when they mean to keep a secret, Alice was too intently thinking of Philip; and farmer Davy was too much immersed in calculations of his son-in-law's riches, to heed these tokens of mutual intelligence. It was only Mistress Deborah who observed, after they were gone, that

her brother seemed to get on "mighty comfortably"—that was her expression with his sister-in-law that was to be.

I'll pass over the dreary time of Farmer Gibbs's wooing, if, indeed, wooing it can be called, when one of the parties is unwilling, and never speaks a word. For though Alice was forced to put up with his visits, she gave him no sort of encouragement, as you may be sure. Still, all the village had now agreed that it was to be a match, and the young reaper who heard these reports, concluded she had played him false for a rich suitor. After watching near the house, day after day, to try and get a sight of Alice, who seldom stirred out, since her father had forbidden her to speak to Philip again, the disappointed lover at last met Janet, who on her side, had been looking out for him, to give him a message from her sister. But the young man's wounded feelings would not allow him to ask any questions, and before Janet could speak a word, he threw down the half of a sixpence, saying in a bitter tone: "Tell your sister I wish her joy of her rich bridegroom, and there's my wedding gift to her." And he then leaped over the stile, and was out of sight in a moment.

"Philip! Philip!" cried Janet, as loud as she dared, for she knew her father's cowherd had been set as a sentry, to prevent anybody's coming near the house without his knowledge, "stop and hear what I've got to say."

F

But the young reaper never even turned round. Janet picked up the broken sixpence with tears in her eyes; "I shall not give it her, for it would be the death of her," thought she, as she put it into her pocket, "and I wish Philip may repent of his obstinacy in not listening to a body."

As troubles seldom come single, Janet found, on returning to the house, that a most painful scene had taken place between the father and daughter. Farmer Davy, already in arrears for his rent, and having lost a sum of money by the failure of a bank in a neighbouring town, in addition to his agricultural losses, had no means left to meet the demands upon him, and was threatened with an execution by his landlord, in case of non-payment. Ruin stared the unhappy man in the face, when Farmer Gibbs once more stepped forward to help him, only this time on condition that the "lassie" would no longer trifle with his suit. So the father knelt to his daughter to entreat her to avert ruin from his grey hairs, and she, poor soul! had consented to sacrifice herself to save him; and at no shorter delay than the following evening, was Farmer Gibbs, together with his sister, to come to sup with the family, and receive her formal acceptance of his proposals, and to fix the day for their marriage. "Though I hope," said poor Alice, "that I may die on my wedding-morning, and then, perhaps,

Farmer Gibbs may still help father, for the sake of my memory."

Janet fell on her neck and sobbed:—"You mustn't marry him, dear Alice! You shan't marry him."

Then snatching up a pitcher, for a pretence to go out into the air, for she could bear the sight of Alice's grief no longer, she went and sat by a favourite spring of her's, which she seemed to look upon as a sort of "wishing" well, for she always went thither whenever she wanted to have a "good bout of thinking," as she called it.

Janet sat, thinking and thinking, till at last all the clouds cleared off from her brow, and then she began to smile again, like the sun after an April shower, and presently returned home. She, however, kept her thoughts to herself for the time being. "Why, you have brought back an empty pitcher!" observed Alice. Janet smiled, and coloured, and darted off again. "How happy she is to be able to smile!" thought her sister, who little dreamed what had caused her sister's absence of mind. All that day Janet performed her household duties with a kind of feverish activity; and when she had done the work of half-a-dozen maids, as her sister afterwards said, she still looked round for something more to do. Towards night her restlessness appeared a little tamed down; and, as she embraced Alice on going to bed, there was something grave, nay, almost solemn in her manner.

suiting to her years; but then she felt convinced, that Alice loved Philip better than she had ever even fancied she could love anybody, and this decided the question; and when once Janet had determined on anything she was as firm as a rock.

Farmer Gibbs returned to his friends paler than he had gone out. "I see that Alice is not meant for me," said he, quite convinced he had seen merely Janet's image, "and so, as fate can't make a mistake, I had better ask for the other lassie at once—and I dare say she'll make a good wife after all." But he neither laughed nor joked any more that night, and felt glad when his boisterous friends had left him.

Next day Janet was up at an early hour, though she had not slept a wink, and bestirred herself to put every thing into order, so that even Mistress Deborah should be satisfied with the neatness of their humble home. Nobody had perceived her absence during the night, and she hoped for the best, though she said not a word of her hopes to her sister, as a failure would have only made matters worse. But her heart fluttered, first, when two or three of their relations who had been invited, dropped in, and wished poor Alice joy (what a mockery, when she looked as pale as death!) and still more, when the elderly suitor and his sister made their appearance. I joined them shortly after, though against my will, and with a heavy heart, for I

thought such a supper worse than a funeral feast. Farmer Gibbs who seemed to me to look very grave for a man who was going to be made happy, had taken his seat amongst his relations that were to be, and after the first greetings were over, for none of them were acquainted with him personally, he cleared his voice, and said: "And so, sirs, you know, I suppose, I've come a-wooing here. And I hope to have your support."

As Farmer Gibbs was rich enough to have bought them all up, they felt great respect for him, and one of them as spokesman for the rest, assured him their family would be proud of his relationship. And Mistress Deborah wishing to be gracious, added: "As my brother will, I am sure, be of his fair bride."

"Hech, sirs," sighed out the farmer, "my *brown* bride, my sister should have said." Then seeing everybody, except Janet, look amazed, he added, turning to the father: "For you see, friend, it was Janet all the while that I meant to have, only"—— (here he seemed to be looking for some excuse) "a girl always puts on a good face before any man that's courting her; so I wanted to see what kind of lassie she really was, before she thought I had any notion of marrying her."

"Well, to be sure!" exclaimed Farmer Davy, who had been very proud of his daughter's beauty ever since it had

brought her a rich suitor, "I always thought you were mightily in love with Alice; however, there's no accounting for taste," added he, without perceiving what a poor compliment he was paying Janet, who, with her usual good nature, thought it quite natural her sister should be put above her. "And what say you, girl?" continued he, fearful lest a more formidable opposition should be in store for him, in case his younger daughter did not choose to comply with this strange mode of courtship.

There was a dead silence, and all eyes were turned towards Janet, who, blushing through her brown skin, said, in her clear, cheerful voice: "I don't say nay, father—and I shouldn't wonder if he turned out a very tractable sort of husband."

This was followed by the cheers and laughter of all present, excepting Alice, who was so overpowered with the joy occasioned by this sudden change, that she had nearly fainted away. Some thought it was from disappointment, but her returning colour and sparkling eyes during the rest of the evening, soon undeceived them, and convinced Farmer Gibbs that he should be much better off with brown Janet as a willing bride, than with an unwilling beauty. The father embraced his daughter with a feeling of gratitude for her ready compliance, and we then sat down to a cheerful supper, only placing Janet by the farmer's side, instead of Alice, as had been intended.

“Have I won the cloak?” whispered Janet, laughing, to her new suitor.

“Yes, lassie, dear,” said he, “and a husband into the bargain, and I think now, it’s all for the best.”

Their wedding took place in the following week, and a happy one it looked, at which there were none but smiling faces around. And when, a short time after, the new couple held a merry-making at their own house, to entertain all their friends, many of whom could not be invited to Farmer Davy’s smaller establishment, Janet sent word to Philip that Mistress Gibbs would be glad of his company, charitably wishing to inflict a little pain upon him to punish him for returning the half sixpence. But I will say for her, she only meant to give him a momentary pang, and when he came, fully intending to face Alice firmly, and show her he despised her fickleness, you may judge of his joy on seeing Janet’s laughing countenance, as she slipped the broken coin into his hand, saying he was welcome to *her* house. Nor was it long before her influence prevailed with her husband to employ Philip on their farm, and to persuade his father-in-law into consenting to his marriage with Alice, though to his dying day, Farmer Davy thought it a great pity that the beauty of the family should make so much less good a match, as he reckoned it, than her less favoured sister, who ever after became his favourite.

G

With the delicacy of true generosity, Janet waited till her marriage was over before she said one word to Alice about the stratagem she had employed, merely professing herself to be well satisfied with being the old man's choice. Nor was it till a year or more after, that she let her husband into the secret. But he, good man! was so flattered by the conviction that she had done so out of pure love for himself, that he soon let the cat out of the bag, and the story went all over the village, while she of course, did not undeceive him about the love part of the business.

Janet reaped the fruits of her self-denial, for she lived most happily with Farmer Gibbs, who made an excellent husband, and was so infatuated with his young wife, that he did her will in everything. In my eyes, Janet was a humble heroine in her way, and never more so than when she gave a calm and approving smile on the old man's observing, as he often did before me: "Ay, dame, there's naething like marrying a lassie that loves you for ain self!"

PUT IT OFF TILL TO-MORROW;  
OR, UNLUCKY DICK.

IN one of my rambles through the village, I had been struck by the wretched appearance of a forlorn looking cottage, standing on the outskirts of a common, whose dirty windows and broken panes bespoke either great carelessness or great penury on the part of its inmates. Two or three ragged children were building dirt edifices in the little garden in front of the cottage; and the garden itself, if indeed it deserved such a name, was a kind of wilderness, choked up with weeds, where the few flowers that had once been planted in the platbands, now no longer distinguishable from the paths, had been suffered to droop and wither from want of care, while the fruit trees, formerly, no doubt, nailed up against the wall, were dragging their branches in the damp soil, and a quantity of last year's apples and pears that had fallen when ripe, were now rotting on the ground for want of being removed in time. How could such a picture of desolation exist in so neat and cleanly a village? Such was the first question that I asked of my kind informant, Dame

Barbara, on returning from my walk, followed up by another to this effect: Was there no provision for the poor in their village, or no kind lord of the manor, or lady "Bountiful," to supply the inefficiency of parish assistance?

Dame Barbara replied that I was over hasty in my judgment. There was no lack of assistance for the deserving, and thank God! still less was there a dearth of charitable hearts in the village and its neighbourhood. But some people were the artificers of their own misfortunes, just as others were the architects of their fortunes; and Unlucky Dick, as he had been nicknamed, belonged to the former class of persons.

Richard Bradley was the son of a farmer and grazier, who was well enough to do in the world, to send his son to a day-school, to acquire a little learning, which he himself had found the want of, in all his transactions through life. He thought, judiciously enough, that by sacrificing a small sum of money, and foregoing the lad's services for a few years, he would make a useful man of him, who, particularly if he turned out clever at accounts, would soon repay him tenfold for the loss of the time when he earned nothing. But Dick had no taste for learning. He was not only a frequent truant from school, but never acquired more than the rough elements of anything, and these imperfectly enough. I'm afraid his writing-master never made him

write out the favourite copy of "Procrastination is the Thief of Time;" or, if he did, that Richard had not learning enough to understand the excellence of the maxim. At all events, he had acquired a bad habit of saying: "I'll put it off till to-morrow, and then see what's to be done." This unfortunate propensity of his was the ruin of him. When Bradley found that nothing could be made of his son at school, he took him away, resolved to make him work at home, rather than spend any more money on a hopeless education. But it was no easy matter to turn him to any good account even here. If he were sent to watch the cattle, and they were trespassing on a neighbour's field, not an inch would he stir to prevent them; and more than once has he been well cudgelled by some farmer, exasperated at having his corn trampled down, and his hedges broken through; or his father had an action brought against him, and been forced to pay damages for his son's carelessness. If he were told to help at apple gathering, you might be sure he never took the trouble to climb up to the higher branches of the tree. These he invariably left for to-morrow.

"But to-morrow never comes with you," said Patty, a smart little playmate of his, who was filling the baskets very diligently,—“Your cousin Luke would do twice as much in the same time.”

This remark had often been made before in the lad's hearing, and it always used to vex him. Luke Bradley was the son of a poor bricklayer, who had left him an orphan without a penny in the world; but as the boy was of industrious habits, and had a mind to follow his father's trade, the grazier had put him apprentice at a master bricklayer's, and in a short time he gave great satisfaction to his employer.

"Yes," observed one of the older bystanders, "Luke is a chap who never loses his time. The other day he had a holiday given him, and instead of idling, he went down to the willow stream, and caught a salmon, which he sold, and was able to buy himself a new hat with the money."

Dick heard this, and thought he should like fishing better than any other sort of work, so he begged his father to buy him a line, assuring him he should then be able to earn something. The grazier who, provided the lad would but stick to something, didn't care what it was, bought him a rod and line, and Dick went and stationed himself beside the stream, never doubting he should instantly catch a fish. "Well, Dick, how are you getting on?" said Patty, who came to fill a pitcher at the same stream.

"Why," said he, "it's beginning to be very hot to sit still in the sun in this manner, and I'm thinking I'll wait till it gets cooler."









"Then I'm afraid you'll overstay your market, Dick," said she, "for now's your time, when the fishes are popping their heads out of the water to enjoy the sunshine."

Dick was ashamed to move, till Patty was out of sight; but presently, his line broke, and then he said to himself, that he must go home to get it mended, and once at home, he thought, he might as well put off fishing till to-morrow. Meantime, Luke, who had no time to sit angling, but had fastened a net up higher in the stream overnight, now came to see what was caught, and found it full of very fine trout.

"No wonder he's so lucky," said Dick, when he heard of this, "it's easy enough to catch fish in a net, and I shall know better another time."

He then borrowed a net of one of his neighbours; but as he was spreading it, he broke some of the meshes. "I'll mend it to-morrow," quoth he, "I daresay it will do well enough just for this once."

A good many fishes passed through his net next morning, and got out again safe enough; but not one staid to tell the tale.

Dick's manhood, as might be expected, was just the counterpart of his boyhood. He tried several trades successively, but failed in each. At one time, he set up as a miller; but as he always put off grinding the corn till it was wanted, he soon lost all his customers. Another time, he

fancied he would be a brewer; but his ale turned sour, from not being stowed away at the proper moment. And thus it was with everything. He now thought himself decidedly unlucky, and went about complaining, instead of mending his habits. The grazier who had spent a life of honest toil, was so provoked at having wasted such sums of money upon his idle son, that he declared he would do no more for him, and that he might just work like any other labourer on his farm. . "He will never mend," said the old man, "unless he meets with a tidy, industrious wife, who'll reclaim him." Now Dick had often thought that Patty was a nice girl, and he had meant to ask her whether she would take up with an unlucky fellow like himself? But as Patty was always at hand, he put off doing so, from one day to another, till, when he did speak at last, he was quite taken aback by her answer, which was to the effect that she and Luke had been engaged for three years, and were only waiting till he had finished building their cottage, to be married.

"He's lucky," said Dick, with a sigh.

"No," said Patty, "he's persevering."

Luke and Patty were married shortly after. The grazier was sorry his son had missed his only chance of reform; it was his own fault, like all the rest, he observed, for had he been half as industrious as his cousin, with the

help he had received to get on in the world, he might have offered Patty a home, long before Luke would have ventured to speak to her about marrying. On his death-bed the poor old man expressed a regret that he had not been spared a little longer, and prayed that his son might never come to want.

Richard now took possession of his father's property, and finding it impossible to do without a wife to look after the dairy and the poultry, thought he would first ask this young maiden, and then the other, but kept shilly-shallying, as usual, till they were carried off by brisker suitors; and what with his delays, and the little inclination any girl felt to encourage "Unlucky" Dick, as he was pretty generally called, he was at length obliged to take up with "Slipshod" Sukey, whose nickname paints her character at once. All the village said they were well matched; but such a wife as you may imagine, was not the woman to reform him. Never did any couple accomplish by dint of sheer laziness, a more sinful waste of the hard earnings of a life of industry, such as the grazier's had been. Sukey showed neither order nor cleanliness in her household arrangements. She thought as they were sure always to have enough to live on, she need not trouble herself about making more butter than the family wanted, and I'm certain many a pint of milk was wasted that might better have been given away to some poor person. The children were let to run wild, and as they

H

generally broke all the eggs they found, her poultry did not yield any profit, and by degrees, she killed nearly the whole stock for their own eating. As to Richard, his shortcomings being on a larger scale, soon brought on more serious consequences still. He put off gathering in his corn one year, till a heavy fall of rain injured his crop; then when it was removed into the barn, and spread on the floor to dry, he kept delaying to stop up a hole in the roof, till the hole grew larger and let in the rain and damp, and the whole crop became rotten. He never fattened his cattle till within a week of the time when he meant to sell them, and then complained that he was very unlucky to get such bad prices for his beasts. A neighbour, seeing his wretched management, offered to purchase his live stock, which, with proper care, might still be turned to good account; but the day the bargain was to be struck, he put off going to meet the purchaser, and the opportunity was lost. From frequent losses and failures, he was obliged to sell first his farm, then one piece of land after another, of course at a disadvantage, as it was in such ill condition; and, lastly, the greater part of his cattle at a very low rate, and to bring the remainder to the cottage you saw this morning, and turn them out to feed on the common. "They will last us for food a long time," said he, "and then we can see what is to be done." The family, as you may imagine, sunk into complete poverty.

One day as he happened to pass by a drove of cattle that was being led to market by a cowherd, he admired their sleek appearance, and inquired to whom they belonged. "They belong to one Luke Bradley," said the man, "and poor things they looked, when we first had them, for they were bought by his foreman at "Unlucky" Dick's sale."

"What!" cried Dick, who had lost sight of Luke ever since he had married Patty, and gone to live at a distance: "Is Luke Bradley no longer a journeyman bricklayer?"

"Lord bless you!" said the man, "he is now a master bricklayer, and has a brick-kiln of his own, besides a good snug farm, that his wife takes care of."

"Dear me, how lucky he has been!"

"Not quite that, either," said the man. "For the first year he went to live in the cottage he built in his off-hours, on a strip of land he rented from his master, his premises were flooded by the neighbouring river. However, he said it would turn his fields into excellent pasture, and so he took in cattle to graze, and that answered so well, that next year he bought some animals of his own. Another time, the rot carried off the greater part of his sheep, but he had shorn them while their wool was still in good condition, so he comforted himself with the reflection, that it would save him the expense of a shepherd for the coming winter, when his wife, who had now two babies, could not look

after them. And six months after he had purchased his master's brick-kiln to begin business for himself, it was burnt clean down by a careless workman. But Farmer Bradley had it built up again on such a good plan, that he can now bake twice as many bricks at half the expense. But I mustn't stay talking any longer, for master tells me never to loiter on the way."

This simple tale struck so many daggers into Richard's heart. But he determined to go and see his old playmate, and try and learn from him how to grow lucky. "Yet perhaps," thought Dick, "he won't have anything to say to me, now he's got up, and I've gone down in the world."

On reaching Luke's farm, he found the still blooming and happy-looking Patty, teaching her eldest girl to sew, while the two younger ones, in their clean white pinafores, were sitting on their little chairs, reading their hornbooks. Dick could not help admiring aloud the exquisite neatness of the room, which contrasted so painfully with his own home, and after a little humming and hawing, he told her his errand, and asked if he could see Luke. Patty who had received him with great kindness, informed him that Luke was just then down at the brick-kiln with their two eldest boys. "But, if you want any advice about your new farm, Dick," said she (civilly calling it so to hide that she knew of his ruin), "I'll tell him when he comes home to go and see

you. And suppose, in the meantime, the children and I walk over to your cottage, that I may talk a bit to your wife?" Richard, half-ashamed that she should see what a pig-sty of a place his home really was, yet could not refuse her proffered kindness, and accordingly, Patty paid her first visit to "Slipshod" Sue. Though prepared for the worst, the farmer's wife could scarcely have thought things were as bad as she found them. With a dirty cap over her uncombed hair, Sukey was alternately washing linen, and cooking the family meal, neither of which occupations derived any benefit from the other, as you may think. The children were sprawling on the floor, pelting each other with potatoes that stood in a basket side by side with the coals in a corner of the room. Sukey was rather abashed on being caught in such disorder, and looked angrily at her husband; but the latter, at a hint from Patty, took away all the children, when the farmer's wife having mildly expostulated with the untidy housewife for her slovenly ways, told her that if she wished her to stand her friend she must first mend her bad habits. She then helped her to set everything into order about the room, and when it was done she said she would return every now and then to see her, and that if she found Sukey kept tidier for the future, her husband and herself would try and help them to get on in the world.

Early the next day Luke came to see Richard, and when the "unlucky" cousin asked his relation what he had best do, he replied: "My dear fellow, I can't give you any better advice than to leave off putting every thing off till morrow. I want a farm labourer just now, and I'm willing to try you, so come along now directly with me."

"Oh, but—" said Richard, "I don't think I can just now. Suppose—"

"Aye, suppose you put it off till morrow," interrupted Luke, laughing. "Now, pray Dick, never put off a necessary reform, or, from what I can see, your children will want for bread."

Dick suffered himself to be overruled out of sheer shame, and went to work at his cousin's. Knowing his weakness, Luke contrives always to keep him busy at something or another, and generally amongst other workmen for the sake of example. And now you'll naturally ask how it fared with Patty's attempt to mend Susan's habits? Why, it went very well at first, and as long as Patty called regularly once a week, "Slipshod" Sue managed to have everything tidy inside the house for that day. For, as to the garden, that was never cleared out, on the pretence that Richard had now no time to attend to it since he worked at Luke's farm. But when the farmer's wife had another infant, and she could not go on looking after her so regularly, things

relapsed into their former disorder. And shocked was Patty as she came in upon her one day by chance, to find house, furniture, and children all at sixes and sevens. "This house is unlucky," said Sukey, to excuse herself.

"I'm afraid she'll never better her ways," said Patty to her husband, "as long as she stays there."

The good couple then resolved to give them one chance more. And now they have prepared them a neat cottage on their own lands, which they are to have rent-free, but only so long as they keep it in clean and tidy condition. They mean to pay for the first year's schooling of the children on the parents' promise to put by money for continuing to send them to school at the end of the twelvemonth, in order that the little creatures may be trained to better habits than they would learn at home. So they are soon going to leave the forlorn place you saw this morning—I only hope they'll turn over a new leaf, and deserve all that's done for them. Surely, after this you'll own that we have kind hearts amongst us, and that Luke Bradley and his wife don't put off doing good!

## A ROMANCE IN AN ALMSHOUSE.

ON extending my excursions to the environs of the village, I had occasion to find that there was no want, as Dame Barbara had assured me, of charitable feelings on the part of the wealthier portion of the community, as a free-school, a row of neat almshouses, and other useful endowments, fully testified. I was particularly pleased with the appearance of the almshouses, which, according to the inscription carved on a stone in the centre of the middle gable, dated as far back as the sixteenth century. There was an air of quiet repose, too, in the trimly kept garden, that ranged along the front of the building, and formed an agreeable whole, while at the same time it was sub-divided into individual portions belonging to the several cottages, and cultivated according to the taste of each inmate, which, together with the elderly inhabitants whom I saw moving to and fro with sedate steps, seemed to carry me back to another age.

I learnt from Dame Barbara that none were admitted before the age of sixty, and she told me, at the same time, that these almshouses had been the scene of a touching

incident, which shows that romance will sometimes find its way even into the simplest annals.

Two old people took possession of two adjoining cottages within a day or two of each other, and being both of neighbourly dispositions, a friendly interchange of services soon arose between them. Old Mike, as he was called, drew water for Mistress Dobson, or chopped sticks, or weeded her garden, while she cooked his meals, or sewed on a truant button, and took upon herself all those nameless little offices that a woman alone can perform.

They had past the age when village gossips pull a character to pieces, so they enjoyed the sweets of friendship undisturbed.

One day, after they had watered their two gardens, which they had enlarged by cancelling the path that marked the bounds of the little territory belonging to each, they sat down on the bench in front of the cottage to rest themselves. The flowers looked so refreshed, and smelled so sweet, as the sunbeams sparkled in the wet drops that still clung to their leaves, that the poor old folks felt their hearts expand at the sight. Happily, there is something left to gladden us at all ages! was the silent reflection of each.

"I was thinking, Dame, how lonely I should be but for you," observed the old man, "for I've been twice married in my time."

"And I have had two husbands," said she.

There was a pause, for aged persons seldom carry on a dialogue very briskly; but presently, as if having well digested what had been said: "And pray, Master Mike," inquired the good old dame, "which of your two wives do you regret the most—the first or the second?"

"The first," he replied.

"That's just my feeling," said she, "my first husband whom I married out of pique to another, was an excellent man and very kind to me, while the second, whom I married out of vanity, made me unhappy as I deserved."

"You're hard upon yourself, Mistress," resumed the old man, "yet I dare say you were not to blame as much as I, who never loved either of my wives one quarter as much as I did my first love."

"That was my sin likewise," said the poor old woman, with the greatest simplicity, "and do you know what first made me feel kindly towards you was, that your name was Mike, as well as *his*. We must hope, neighbour, that God will deal leniently with our failings."

"Amen," said he.

Another pause ensued. Presently, old Mike resumed: "There was some fault on her part, too, I must say—I'm speaking now of my first love—for if she had but been less proud, we might have made up our foolish quarrel and been happy."









"And if my poor Mike, who is in heaven by this time," said Mistress Dobson, "had but turned back when we fell out, he would have seen me in tears, and not have been so stubborn as to leave me in anger."

The old folks remained plunged for awhile in their reflections, each following mentally the path through which their fancy led them back to the days of their youth.

"I see her still before me, as plain as I see you, Dame," said the old man, in a dreamy soliloquizing strain, "sitting at her spinning-wheel before her cottage door. The flax on her wheel was not so fine nor so silky as her own light brown hair, and when she looked up at one with her intelligent eyes, and sweet, grave face, you felt ready to worship her as one of God's own angels. You know little Jenny who brings eggs and butter to her Grandame, that lives three doors off, and how pretty everybody thinks her? Well! she's no more to be compared to my first love than a farthing candle is to the sun. There are no such maidens now-a-days, as I do verily think; at least I never saw anything so beautiful since."

"And how did you come to quarrel with her, neighbour?" said Mistress Dobson after taking due time for the digesting process already alluded to.

"I was a hot-headed youth, then," said Mike, "she was only sixteen and I but three years older. She was proud,

as naturally she might be, of her beauty, and I was jealous. It's a bad feeling, I know, but I loved her to distraction, and could not help it. People say, truly enough, that lovers' quarrels are always based on trifles; but who would have thought that a magpie could have been the cause of making me wretched for life?"

"And no wonder either," said the old woman in a soothing tone: "I remember it was a pert magpie who affronted my poor Mike. I have hated magpies ever since."

The old man, too much absorbed in calling up the recollections of past years to pay much heed to Mistress Dobson's remark, resumed the thread of his tale: "Well! my dear love had a magpie who talked a great deal of nonsense, as magpies will; and I was often provoked at the bird's interrupting our talk with some silly, ill-timed word or joke, while she only laughed and chided me for my impatience. But one unlucky day, when I was upbraiding her with having accepted a ribbon at a fair from a young farmer named Donald, and she answered that she had a right to do as she pleased, if that wicked bird did not cry out with a chuckle: 'I love Donald!' This made me fly into a rage, and without reflecting that as the bird frequently heard the words 'I love,' and as frequently was present at my jealous upbraidings about Donald, it was very natural, not having any sense to guide him, he should jumble many

of our words together, I inquired angrily whether she had taught him this obnoxious sentence on purpose to insult me? She told me I did not deserve an answer. Then I said that if she wished me to believe she had not taught the bird, she would deliver up the ribbon the young farmer had given her, and we would be friends. But this she positively refused. I then begged and entreated, and promised to give her two ribbons for it, but all to no purpose. 'Then you don't love me,' observed I, 'since a ribbon is dearer to you than my peace of mind.' 'Mike,' said she, 'your jealousy is quite unbearable,' and as if to make matters worse, and to drive me to desperation, the magpie went on chuckling out: 'Dear Donald!' 'Pretty Donald!' 'Sweet Donald!' This was not to be borne. I started up in a fury, seized the bird by the throat, and before she could prevent me, I strangled it, exclaiming: 'Confound you, and Donald too.' It's now fifty years ago since I twisted that poor magpie's neck, yet I still remember the sensation of its ruffled feathers fluttering in my iron grasp; and do you know, Dame, to this day I feel remorse for the deed?"

The good old man's head then drooped upon his breast, and he remained immersed in thought.

"This is exactly my own story over again," observed Mistress Dobson. "But, neighbour, you killed the bird in a passion, that's not as bad as if it had been in cold blood,

and, perhaps, if she had said a kind word to turn away your wrath, you would not have done it at all."

"I hope not," said old Mike, "for I no sooner saw the magpie lying stiff and dead, than I bitterly lamented my rashness. And I was going to tell her so, when she snatched the bird out of my hand, and smoothing down its glossy feathers as she laid it on her snowy bosom, that was heaving with grief for the loss of her favourite, she said: 'You are not only jealous, but passionate, cruel, and hard-hearted, and I'll never forgive you for killing my poor magpie.' 'O,' said I, tauntingly, 'I dare say you'll manage to learn to say: I love Donald, without the magpie's teaching.' Her eyes flashed fire at these words, and, with quivering lip and dilated nostrils, she said: 'I'll learn to say: I hate you, Mike.' 'Then now I see you are no better than a jilt,' returned I, 'and if that's the case, I may as well leave you at once.' 'You may do as you please,' said she. 'You'll repent when it's too late,' cried I, half sorry to have gone so far. 'Not till my bird comes to life again,' replied she, bitterly. 'Then I'll go, and it shall be for ever, and I'll put the wide seas between us.' Now my heart was ready to burst as I spoke these words, and I would have given worlds that she had merely said: 'Don't.' But she turned her head away, and uttered a 'go, then,' which sent a dagger through me; so partly not to be out-

done in pride, and partly not to seem weak by threatening what I had not the heart to fulfil, I snatched up my cap, and saying: 'You shall never see me again,' I ran off without as much as turning my head to give a last look at that lovely creature who most likely was sorry, when too late, that she had spoken so harshly."

"Why, now you've been telling word for word all that happened to me in my young days," said Mistress Dobson, "and if it were not that he died long ago, I should say, neighbour, that you were my own poor Mike, or, Mike o' the Mount, as he used to be called, his very self."

"Sure enough I used to be called Mike o' the Mount, to distinguish me from three or four other young chaps who were christened Mike like myself," said the old man; "but you are not my Nelly, Dame."

"My name is Nelly," resumed Mistress Dobson, "Snow-drop Nelly, they used to call me," added she, with a faint smile.

The old man gazed long and wonderingly at his elderly companion. He found it impossible to identify the blooming Nelly who had stopped at sixteen in his imagination, with the wrinkled countenance shaded with grey locks, that was by his side. He remained silent.

"Go on, neighbour," said she.

Had such a recognition taken place only thirty years

before, there would no doubt have been a great explosion of joy, tears, reproaches and explanations, all ending in a rapturous reconciliation ; but time had worked his way with our old couple, and cooled the hot head of the one, and undermined the pride of the other, and their pulses had long ago ceased ever to rise to fever heat.

“What was I saying?” resumed the old man, as if waking from a trance—“Oh, I remember now. Well! as she didn’t call me back I felt compelled to go on, and, finding by the end of the day, that she sent no message after me, I left the village and went to sea. After three voyages, I grew thoroughly disgusted with a sea-faring life; for who that’s been born in the country can bear to be deprived month after month of the sight of a tree, or a green field, in the spring, or the height of summer? So I left the ship, though the purser who had taken a liking to me, and occasionally employed me, finding I wrote a fair hand, and was a good accountant, would fain have persuaded me to stay and make my fortune. But when he found me determined, he gave me a letter for a brother of his, a stationer, residing in a large town in the West of England, to whom he strongly recommended me. I, however, longed for nothing but to return to our village, thinking that as above three years had now gone by, Nell and I might make it up, when I learnt on reaching this neighbourhood

that she was married, and had gone to live at a distance, so I travelled on, and took the purser's letter to his brother. He at once gave me employment, and I set to work to put his books into order, for he kept them very negligently. The stationer had a rather pretty looking sister who used to smile at me, and ask me why I was so sad. But I don't think I should have paid much attention to her, had it not happened by a singular coincidence that *her* name too was Nelly. This melted my heart. She advised me to put my little savings into their business, which I did, and married her shortly afterwards. We had two children, one of whom I christened Eleanor, less after her mother, I'm afraid, than after my first love. It pleased God to take them both in the days of their childhood, and do you know that, although the least promising child of the two, the one I regretted most was little Nell?"

Old Mike paused with a heavy sigh. But an encouraging "Go on, neighbour," from his companion, had the same effect as winding up the works of a clock, and he resumed his story.

"Our business did not prosper, so I lost my little savings to no purpose, though I acquit Nell of having purposely deceived me. Only she could not bear the rubs and disappointments of the world. At my brother-in-law's death, I took the business entirely into my own hands; but his

K

customers had all fallen off, owing to his neglect, and after struggling for years, I had only barely sufficient to pay all my creditors by selling every stick I possessed in the world. My wife had died of fretting some months previous. After this I longed once more for the country, and I entered the service of a miller's widow, who took a liking to me, and we married. I now thought myself happy in having secured a comfortable home, for the miller's wife was rich. But unfortunately her temper was as violent as mine formerly was, and we used to fall out three or four times a day, on which occasions she always reproached me for having been the making of me, though she was so avaricious that she grudged me every shilling I spent on myself. At length, death put an end to our squabbles, when I found she had left all her property to a young fellow who worked at the mill, while she bequeathed me only a small annuity "just enough to keep me from starving," as she stated in her will. So when I grew too old to work, I came back to my village, and being now rent free, I am at least certain I shall not want for bread in my declining years."

When the old man had done speaking: "Shall I tell you what, neighbour?" began Mistress Dobson. "When I said 'I hate you, Mike,' I never meant it, and when I said 'go,' I hoped you'd stay; only I wanted to cure you of your jealous ways. For I swear to you before the light of

Heaven, that I had never taught the bird to say, 'I love Donald,' for he had a lass of his own, and I did send after you, only it was too late, and I had like to have broken my heart."

"Then you are the real Nelly after all?" said old Mike.

Mistress Dobson dived down into the depths of her pocket, and drew forth a small housewife, from which she took a lock of dark brown hair, carefully wrapt in a piece of thin paper. "Do you know this, Mike?" said she.

The old man, on his part, had searched for his pocket-book, and pulled out a small patch of silk, to which was fastened a lock of hair of a beautiful shade, and so long that it was coiled round and round like a miniature rope.

"Do you remember this, Dame?" inquired he.

The two withered hands met in a cordial grasp.

"It never left my pocket," said both, in a breath.

"I looked at it night and morning," said he.

"So did I, except during the lifetime of each of my husbands," said Mistress Dobson, "although as I told you I married the first out of spite, because I wouldn't seem to regret you, nor let the neighbours think you had deserted me. And the second, whom I sillily married late in life, because I was flattered by the attentions of a man so much younger than myself, used me very ill, which was a just punishment for my bad motives in marrying my first husband, when, in reality, I loved nobody but you, Mike."

"I like to hear you say so, Dame," said the old man, "what a pity you didn't tell me at once you hadn't taught the bird on purpose to vex me, then we might have reasoned quietly, as we do now, and each have given way a little to the other."

"And then we might have been happy these fifty years!" chimed in the old dame.

"But it can't be helped now!" they added, with mournful philosophy, "let's be thankful at least to have met on this side of the grave."

It excited some laughter in the parish when the banns of Mike Owen and Eleanor Dobson were read in church on the following Sunday. But I saw nothing ridiculous in it; on the contrary, I thought it a touching idea of the old man's to wish, as he told the clergyman, that they might be enabled to bear the same name on their common tombstone. They lived for about ten years from this time, comforting each other's old age, and then gently dropped off to their last sleep on the same day, and within the same hour, a complete realization of Burns's exquisite lines :

"Now we maun totter down, John, but hand and hand we'll go,  
And sleep thegither at the foot, John Anderson my Jo."

THE END.





BOUND BY  
BONE & SON,  
76, FLEET STREET,  
LONDON.

